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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JANUARY 1st, 1854.

Music in this Number.

INCLINE THINE EAR.

Music by HIMMEL and VINCENT NOVELLO, and adapted to English
by WM. FATTEN.

TWELFTH NIGHT.

By LEIGH HUNT.

FOR many reasons, new and old, the author of this article is as happy to find himself writing in the present paper, as if he were within hearing of actual music, the circumstance of all others. (a certain quiet kind of companionship excepted) under which he feels his thoughts flowing to their greatest comfort. "Advantage" he must not say, for reasons which may be too obvious; and people sometimes fail in doing their best out of a special desire to do it. But old and inherited friendships, the consciousness of being within the sphere of an art which he loves, and a subject to set his pen going like the one before us, the pleasure of all this may communicate some little bit of itself to the reader, if it do nothing more.

Hail then, royalest of the nights of Christmas! finish and climax of its holidays! night of King and Queen; night of Characters; night of Twelfth Cake! night, on which that brilliant phenomenon rises like another moon; rises indeed like what it is, the sublunary moon of the season; round, and fair, and glittering; accompanied also by worlds of other moons, the clusters in a thousand shops, as though the moon itself were beheld through pieces of cut glass, and so turned into multitudes of its like.

Thee, O most illustrious and attractive of cakes, all the little Galileos of the streets contemplate through the glasses of the shop windows,—

At evening, on the top of Finsbury,
Or in Belgravia, to descry new sweets
(Not to be theirs) beneath thy spot of snow.*

In thee the maturer youth sees all his enjoyments of the coming evening,—his friend Smith, and his friend's sister, and his own song, and his character, which he hopes will be that of some high court officer, or at least of some *quizzier*, rather than *quizzee*. In thee, by like anticipation, Miss Smith responds to the royal aspirations of Blinkinsop, not without fear of being made a fright of a character. In thee, mothers, discerning a little too far, as astronomers do into lunar volcanos, behold doubts of the paints, and

dreads of the demands of third slices; pleased nevertheless to think that the children will be more admired than found wanting. In thee, finally, besides antiquaries their lores, and poetical readers their quotations, and all people their greetings of the good custom, the oldest of old boys will see the Twelfth Nights of former days, and comfortably shake their heads with one another at the falling off of the present, happy at the same time to think that they have reached another new year, and secure of reaching many more, as long as they can discern cake from crumpet, and there is one single person in existence who is older than themselves. Pleasing privilege of old age! and as pleasing to others as to themselves, if there is a single person living whom they love and are loved by, and who will take care to help them to a slice of the cake, before younger ones are served.

It is a great addition to the pleasure of doing a good thing, to consider that everybody, who can, is doing it at the same moment. (Those who cannot, we must think of before and afterwards, but not at the same moment; otherwise we shall embitter every morsel we taste, and so destroy the pleasure that we would diffuse.) Yes,—all the genial people in Christendom who can afford a Twelfth Cake to-night, will be having it—from the buyers of the cake that costs guineas, down to those who are glad to get the humblest sixpenny imitation of it; and all these people, we may rest assured, will be enjoying it more or less in the same way; for "everybody," as the philosopher said, "is more like than unlike everybody else;" and customs which are universal, resemble one another among different ranks a good deal more than people suppose. The cost is not the point, but the individual's good sense, health, and companionability. Besides, the highest life does not differ from the humblest life so much as certain would-be great people imagine. It knows its comforts too well, and does not care what pretenders may think of it. While the upstart is fidgetting about his "urn" and his "footman," the marquis is probably taking the kettle off the drawing-room fire, to help the countess, who is making tea, and if there is anything of which we are assured at this moment as we are of the existence of sense and good-nature, it is that the greatest personage in the kingdom will be as blithe over her Twelfth Cake with her husband and children, as the best village housewife in her dominions. And the housewife will be as blithe as she.

Two questions are sometimes asked respecting Twelfth Night: first, what it is; and second, what is the best way of keeping it. It is curious that people should ask what a thing is which they are all doing; though, to be sure, if we were as candid as we are ignorant, we should all find ourselves putting the same question about

* Vide Milton, of Galileo looking at the moon;—

At evening from the top of Fiesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.

a hundred common-places. It is not the poorest people only, who stand in need of the late new suggestion of philanthropy—the recommendation of a knowledge of “common things.” There will be thousands of rooms to-night in the greatest houses, which will endanger the health of the joyous and accomplished inmates, for want (even after all that has been said and written on the subject) of a little common knowledge of ventilation; a case which we instance for the seasonable prevention of faintings away, and the better digestion of the cake and turkey. The teacher of common things would also do a great deal of good on the like occasions, if he went about ripping up the bodices of tight-lacers, and laying his embargo on green teas, and acidulated drops of vitriols. But we must not be growing didactic on holidays. Twelfth Night is not a time for preaching. Sir Andrew Aguecheek was not so inconsiderate a jolly fellow as he wished to be thought, when being asked on Twelfth Night whether he would have “a love song, or a song of good life,” said the love song, for he “cared not for good life.”

Twelfth-Night, so called from its being the conclusion of the twelve days of Christmas, is one of the Christian versions of those natural winter holidays, which have prevailed from times the most ancient, and which are the instinctive result of the necessity which is felt for a double portion of joy and sociality at so inclement a time. Greeks and Romans had their Kings of the Feast, and their drawing of lots for imaginary dominions; the Christians of the middle ages converted into these kings the “wise men of the East,” who are described as bringing presents to the infant Jesus; the cake and its ornaments (formerly called among us the Baby Cake) were the presents which they brought; the Characters of Twelfth-Night arose out of the imaginary court-officers and their ladies who were appointed to wait on the king and queen; and the wassail-bowl was the wine or other liquor, which was drunk at their coronation. To this jumble of Pagan and Christian ideas nobody now, of any creed, adheres. Devout believers, of course, retain their opinion of the circumstance on which it is founded; but in the cake, the king and queen, and the characters, &c., nobody now sees any thing but the merriment of a winter custom; and the devotion would be thought ill-timed that should hazard the confusion of serious and jocose by bringing church and such state together.

As to the best way of keeping Twelfth-Night, it must depend on the habits and inclinations of the parties concerned. Any way is bad, which thinks more of the form than the spirit; and any way is good, which is innocent, hearty, and successful. Some, who look at the custom from the antiquarian point of view, would do nothing on the occasion which was not done by their

ancestors; a principle, which if their ancestors had acted upon it, would have carried them up to *their* ancestors, and so on through Greek and Egyptian till they came to Adam; whose Christmas at present would hardly be very comfortable. Others, who have a vulgar horror of doing any thing which they think vulgar, that is to say, of what is done by persons not so well off as themselves (an absurdity, which as we have before intimated, prevails the less in society, the higher in it we go) will have no Christmas, and no wassail bowl; because the former, they think, may commit their dignity; and the latter, they have heard, is made of such vulgar things as ale and roasted apples. Now the wassail-bowl is made of ale (and a very good drink it is) only where no wine is to be had. You might make it of Tokay, if you were rich enough; and very sorry people would ladies and gentlemen of the anti-vulgar description feel themselves to be, if they found themselves travelling in the region where Tokay is produced, and were obliged to put up before the landlord with a wine less costly; for costly it is, even there. The roasted apples, formerly called lamb's wool when thus mixed with the wassail drink, are despised by these gentry, because they are to be had at a half-penny a piece. As if any one who knew copper from clay, would buy the finest of their fine notions for half so much!

A good hearty peasant's or workman's Twelfth-Night is composed of an ale wassail bowl, a cake however homely (the best may be bought by co-operation) and as much king and queen, and character, as he feels inclined to throw in. Such would have been the Twelfth-Night of Burns, had he kept it; and who that has lived long enough, would not be proud to have passed such “a night with Burns?” No man could have done more justice to the part of a King of Good Fellows; and as for Characters, who could desire a better set than would have been furnished by the author of Tam o'Shanter? But ale, in order to be qualified for the wassail-bowl, must be sugared, and have nutmeg in it, and the aforesaid roasted apples; one of which, or a portion of it, is to be taken into each of the glasses in which the ale is served; and if all this does not sufficiently elevate the drink into something “genteel,” or must be thought for the most part rather to degrade it, the aspirant may substitute for the ale the wine as above mentioned, and then he need not be ashamed to invite the dullest of his acquaintances to the potation. Besides, ale, it must be granted, whether spiced or otherwise, is not pleasant to every palate; whereas Burns himself, with all his eulogies of it, would gladly have partaken of the wine, provided the possessor had wit enough of his own to warrant the asking him to his party.

In old times a bean and a pea used to be put into the Twelfth-cake, the bean for the king's lot

and the pea for the queen's. At present, the royal as well as the other characters are chosen by coloured engravings, folded up, and handed round to the company. The drawing commences any time between tea and supper, and the characters are supported till the meal. They may continue however during it, or after it, if they be so disposed; and the king and queen should always occupy the head of the table. Modes have varied in these, as they do in every thing, at different periods; and we suspect that nothing is absolutely indispensable to Twelfth-Night, but a cake, and drink of some sort, and merriment. In Shakspeare's play of that name, there is no allusion even to the cake; unless we are to suppose it implied in the immortal question respecting "cakes and ale;" which it probably is; especially as the two are mentioned together.

Sir Toby (to the Steward). "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

Clown. "Yes, by Saint Anne; and ginger shall be hot in the mouth too."

Anne was the saint who bestowed the means of rich living; and ginger was an indispensable ingredient in the cake. The Clown, it seems, loved a good deal of it. In the Masques, or Court Entertainments, of Ben Jonson, several of which were brought out on Twelfth Nights, there is no mention of the Cake but once.

We should be rash, however, if we concluded that a great deal of it was not eaten, the court of his Majesty King James, who came from the Land of Cakes, being famous for eating and drinking of all sorts. The Puritans attempted to put down Christmas altogether; the consequence of which was, that it revived with a new excess under Charles the Second, whose "Beauties" (if such their foolish faces must be called) ate their cake, and played at forfeits, with all the pretended simplicity and real silliness of a parcel of underbred school-girls. The best among them was Nell Gwyn, who had no breeding at all, but who retained her good heartedness. If we possessed Fortunatus's wishing-cap, and could partake, at our will and pleasure, and on one and the same evening, the enjoyment of the four main kinds of Twelfth Night, which are to be found in Her Majesty's dominions, those of the agricultural class, of the mechanical, of the commercial, and the aristocratical, we should go, for a taste of the first, to the remotest one we could find, as that which was likely to be the most primitive;—some cottage in which the oldest country customs were to be met with:—for the second, we should seek the pleasantest person we could hear of who was an attender at a Mechanics' Institution and a Singing Class, as we should take him to be the man of his class of society the most likely to be a person of natural refinement:—for the third, we should join the

party of that man of business who knew how to enjoy money as well as to get it, and who loved to see around him the faces which it made happy:—and for the fourth, we should wish ourselves into the circle of one of those large-hearted, therefore wisest and pleasantest statesmen, who have come forward of late years to lecture at the institutions just mentioned, and whose homes are likely to furnish the best evidences of that enjoyment perfected by intelligence, which they are so justly anxious to diffuse.

Mighty talking this, for a man who is too ailing if not too old, to visit his next door neighbour! But the imagination which books and Twelfth-Nights have helped to cultivate, is a great paymaster. We sit here, by our fire-side, and think of all the nights of this description which we have enjoyed; and very young and robust are we, while so thinking. We see the whole evening's entertainments, proceeding with a kind of involuntary order, the natural consequence of pleasures growing out of one another. First, there is the tea, which makes a quieting and refreshing interval between dinner, and the enjoyments to come; then rises the talk of what is coming, and of old Twelfth-Nights as well as new (provided old faces have not been too newly missed); then out of this talk naturally grow references to books and poets (already lying near us on a table, in case we would read aloud, or our memory wants assistance); then music is suggested by the poetry (for all records of Twelfth-Night abound in music, and no pleasure is to be balked, which any of us desires, and which all approve); then dancing must needs come (for now the mirth begins to grow eager, stimulated by some Laughing Trio, or other triumphant strain); then the Cake itself makes its consolidating appearance, hailed by the clapping of the hands of the little boys (in which the grandfathers join), and ushered in perhaps to the strain of "See the conquering hero comes" (for what will not sweets conquer?) then follow the drawing of king and queen, and of the characters, whether court-characters or otherwise, that is to say, characters in court-offices, or taken indiscriminately from existing manners; then is established the maintenance of these parts till supper aforesaid, or as late as you please; then comes the supper itself, with songs and glees, &c., after it, whether accompanied or not;—then, past midnight, we don't say how long, are muttered some remote hints of going away; and then perhaps,—eh?—yes, we have seen such things, and have survived them these four and thirty years,—there makes its appearance, breakfast; yea, breakfast at dawn; breakfast on St. Distaff's day; for that is the day next after Twelfth Night; the day on which we all ought to be spinning our jennies or our brains;—by which same token of breakfast, though we have mentioned the circumstance be-

fore, but it is a great circumstance, and will bear repetition,—we partook once of a Twelfth Night, which has been ever since called, by way of eminence, *the Twelfth Night*, and which closed with that same victorious meal at daylight, when an assemblage of some of the finest eyes in the world, looked, by the acknowledgment of all present, as if they were still untired. The night, like Shakspeare's Twelfth Night, began with music; an accomplished musician set it going; it rolled on with music, amidst wits, poets, and beauties; and when the company broke up after breakfast, and the door was opened to let them forth, they were not only saluted by the morning rays, but there suddenly, and like enchantment, struck up the trumpets of a troop of horse, as if on purpose to greet them, and do honor to the lovely victors.

We do not say to the reader, Go and do likewise. That must depend upon a hundred circumstances of time, place, and occasion. The party in question did not do it themselves on purpose. They never even did it again. Circumstances carried most us in different directions: and had the case been otherwise, the particular impulse might not have occurred. We only mentioned it, because the subject, like the occasion, transported us. Besides, health is to be considered; and we heartily join in the advocacy of good hours. All that we have desired to do in these remarks on a social custom, is to furnish those who might desire it with such a knowledge of the custom as we possessed; to recommend to them as much or as little use of the knowledge as would best meet the ideas of enjoyment in their own circles; and to partake with them, in imagination, a harmless pleasure.

ANECDOTICAL NOTICES OF SOME OF THE OLD COMPOSERS.

HANDEL.

UNDER the above title we propose to place before our readers some of the principal incidents in the biography of our ancient standard composers, selected from indisputable authority: rather seeking to offer an entertaining sketch of their musical career, than to present a detailed history of their lives, or discussion of their distinguishing merits.

We give precedence to Handel. His regality of portly presence, alike with his supremacy of genius, seems to demand this as a kind of right. Looking at that picture of him, where he is represented in all the dignity of richly embroidered coat, full bottomed perriwig, and flowing ruffles, with his amplitude of person, and jovial rotundity of countenance, sitting in a large chair, by a round table heaped with music-books, and his whole air redolent of potential wealth in intellect and vigorous proportion,—some one said of it:—"That looks just the man to write double-choruses!"

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL (there is something large and lordly in the very names,—a sort of trumpet

mouthful!) was the son of a physician; and was born on the 24th Feb., 1684, at Halle, in Upper Germany. He was destined by his parents for the law; but at an early age he exhibited so decided a taste for music, that every musical instrument was carefully excluded from his father's house, in the vain hope of checking this inclination, and holding him to the fulfilment of the family design. The innate propensity, however, was there, and not to be controlled. Its first dawn manifested itself, upon the occasion of a visit which the child paid, in company with his father, to the household of the Duke of Saxe Weissenfels; in whose chapel, when only seven years of age, the boy Handel created a sensation, by having strayed to the organ, and touching the keys in such a manner as attracted the notice of the Duke, who chanced to be there. Upon enquiring who the performer was, the Duke remonstrated with Handel's father on the propriety of allowing the boy to pursue so decided a bent; and although inflexible at first, the parent at length conceded the point. Handel's studies were prosecuted under Zachau, a sound musician, and organist of the cathedral church of Halle; but whose power of instruction, the pupil, at thirteen years of age, had altogether outstripped.

On Handel's first residence in Hamburg, it is said, that he played a ripieno violin in the orchestra of the opera; but that on the absence of the harpsichord-player, he acted as his substitute with so masterly an effect, that he commanded general admiration, and at once established his reputation as a performer on that instrument. The dethroned harpsichord-player, however, was not inclined to abdicate his post, or to submit to its resignation without testifying his resentment. Some accounts say that he challenged Handel, who only escaped his antagonist's sword by its coming in contact with the button of his coat. Other versions relate, that the incensed harpsichordist waylaid his rival returning from the opera, with intent to stab him; and that Handel was preserved from the assassin's blow by an opera-score which he was carrying home in the breast-pocket of his coat. This seems so fitting a source of safety for the great musician, that we cannot help inclining, in preference, to its belief. Four of Handel's operas—*Almeria*, *Nerone*, *Florinda*, and *Daphne*—were produced at Hamburg, previous to his departure from that city. He went thence to Florence, where he composed his opera of *Roderigo* for the Grand Duke John Gaston de Medicis, whose mistress, it is said, carried her admiration for the young musician to so indiscreet an extent, that had he responded to it as indiscreetly, it might have resulted in the ruin of both. Handel, however, whose paramount passion was music, prudently withdrew from these too flattering favors, and repaired to Venice; where friendship made him ample amends for gallantry, as he here formed an acquaintance with Domenico Scarlatti, Gasparini, and Lotti. Subsequently, at Rome, he enjoyed the society of Corelli and the best masters; and from thence went to Naples. After a period spent in his own country, at Hanover, Handel thought of visiting London; but before he left Germany, he went to see his mother, and his old preceptor Zachau, at Halle. His father had been dead some time; and he found his surviving parent, suffering not only from advanced age, but from blindness,—a touching premonition, alas, of an affliction destined to fall also upon her gifted son. Handel's sojourn in England was so long,